

Duckabush Estuary Restoration Project Newsletter

Winter 2021

Vol. 4

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is working in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG) to restore habitat at the mouth of the Duckabush River. The project would reconnect the Duckabush River to adjacent wetlands by modifying local roads and elevating Highway 101 onto a bridge. The bridge would span the entire valley where the Duckabush River meets the Hood Canal, recreating rare habitat important to native fish and wildlife.

More project information can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/duckabush>

Project Design Update

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 forcing staff to telework, coordinate virtually and limit field work, design work is on schedule for completion in mid-2022.

To accommodate estuary restoration and reconnection of historic river channels, Highway 101 will need to be relocated and opened to traffic before the estuary restoration work can begin.

The project team will present 35% level of design to the public in spring or summer of 2021. The design team will evaluate public health recommendations in place at that time, but this will likely be a virtual event.

Preliminary project features include:

- A new ~1,600-foot-long estuary-spanning bridge elevated ~6 feet higher to allow for high tides and flood conditions to flow beneath the new bridge.
- Wider shoulders and a re-designed intersection at Duckabush Road, with a left turn lane from Highway 101 onto Duckabush Road.
- Additional public parking adjacent to Duckabush Road at the north end of the new bridge.
- Restoration and reconnection of several historic tidal and river channels to improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Recent Project Activity in the Estuary

Summer's drier weather allowed a cultural resources field crew to survey 35 acres of tidelands, estuary, and uplands. The flat, fertile grounds of river mouths have historically been used for human settlement and subsistence. The Duckabush estuary is no exception - with historic use by native tribes, connections to Washington's early logging industry and, by the early 1900s, a well-known vacation destination at Pierce's Farm. Cultural resource investigation is intended to assess the cultural resources present and probable impact of the proposed project on archaeological sites, should any be present.

In the fall, WSDOT began geotechnical explorations and expects to complete 33 bore holes. Holes 2-inches wide and several hundred feet deep will provide information about soil conditions, allowing the team to develop a suitable project design. Samples collected by WSDOT will be taken to a lab for further analysis by both soils experts and cultural resource experts. Geotechnical work will continue intermittently through summer of 2021 and may involve periodic road closures to place equipment.



WSDOT drill rig on left bank levee. Dec 2020.

Partner Spotlight: Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group

Based in Belfair, the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG) is an integral partner in the Duckabush Estuary Restoration Project, bringing their expertise and connecting the project to the coordinated salmon recovery effort in Washington State.



Habitat restoration is a major focus of HCSEG. Through state and federal grants and a growing group of ambitious community volunteers, HCSEG and project partners conduct habitat restoration projects. Every year the organization plants thousands of trees, replaces undersized culverts with new bridges, and removes invasive plant species. HCSEG and partners (including WDFW) have also been working directly to save Endangered Species Act listed Hood Canal summer chum, Puget Sound steelhead, and Puget Sound Chinook. HCSEG creates educational programming, carries out research, conducts habitat restoration, and demonstrates sustainable, organic agricultural practices at the edge of salmon habitat through their small “Farm at Water’s Edge” near the Union River.

Creating opportunities for community involvement



HCSEG staff and volunteers collecting water quality data.

Starting in January 2018, HCSEG began a citizen science project in the estuary. This project allowed local volunteers to connect with the Duckabush estuary through hands-on activities, including water quality sampling, bird counts, and photo-documentation. These citizen scientists gathered information that can be used as baseline data to evaluate the outcomes of our work in this habitat.

In the summer of 2020, HCSEG organized a 4-day clean-up of the Duckabush estuary. Due to COVID restrictions, we had to limit the number and timing of volunteers and 19 people were still able to fill a dumpster with almost 2,500 pounds of trash! We look forward to planning additional clean-up events in the summer of 2021 and keeping local Hood Canal communities engaged in this meaningful restoration project.



Young clean-up volunteers.

More Information

We expect to send a newsletter with project updates approximately 3-4 times per year or as important topics arise. **If you have questions, comments, or ideas about the project you can send them to the project contacts listed below.**

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